Student Activism as a High-Impact Practice

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AAC&U
The efforts of diverse students to forge their own place in campus life through organized demonstrations may also be understood as a form of participatory democracy. Thus, [student activism and unrest] instead may be understood as democracy playing itself out, as diverse students seek to build a truly multicultural society through the colleges and universities they inhabit.

Rob Rhoads

*No chronological endpoint has been set for this group. Generation Z age ranges vary by analysis.

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• Born after 1995
• Population: ~74 Million or 21.5% of total U.S.
• Most racially diverse generation
• Social media natives
• Most WOKE generation?
About six-in-ten Gen Zers say forms should offer other gender options

% saying that when a form or online profile asks about a person’s gender it should include options other than ‘man’ and ‘woman’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gen Z</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennial</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boomer</td>
<td>37</td>
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<tr>
<td>Silent</td>
<td>32</td>
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“Generation Z Looks a Lot Like Millennials on Key Social and Political Issues”

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Gen Z Republicans more likely than other Republicans to say blacks aren’t treated fairly

% saying that overall in our country today, blacks are treated less fairly than whites

<table>
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<td>Republican/Lean Republican</td>
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“Generation Z Looks a Lot Like Millennials on Key Social and Political Issues”

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All Respondents (2017): How important do you consider each of the following to be in our democracy: Protecting citizens’ free speech rights.

All Respondents (2017): Do you think colleges should or should not be able to establish policies that restrict each of the following types of speech or expression on campus?

- Using slurs/Other language that is intentionally offensive to certain groups.
- Wearing costumes that stereotype certain racial or ethnic groups.
- Expressing political viewpoints that are upsetting or offensive to certain groups.

% saying should be able to restrict:

- Extremely important
- Very important
- Moderately important
- Not that important

Bars for different groups (All, Men, Women, Whites, Blacks, Democrats, Independents, Republicans, HBCU Students) are shown for each category.
IT'S NOT ABOUT "FREE SPEECH"
IT'S ABOUT BIGOTS TRYING TO NORMALIZE HATE
1. Recognize a new normal...no “ostriching”

2. Reframe activism on your campus as a HIP...democracy in action

3. But, just like our democracy these days, student activists need help in order to be more successful
Educators Need to Partner with Activists

1. Build trust before a crisis
2. Teach them how the institution works
3. Establish channels for regular communication, especially during a crisis
4. Take care of student activists...they are at risk
- Model controversy with civility
- Own intentions and impacts
- Challenge by choice
- Foreground respect, even when you disagree
- No attacks

Source: Arao & Clemens: From Safe Spaces to Brave Spaces - 2013
Responding to Unrest: Action Steps

Connect  Partner  Avoid  Never
Questions to Consider at your Tables

1. How does your campus administration view student activism? How do you know this?
2. What are some tangible ways that we can help students be more effective activists?
Discussion Topics

1. Civic Engagement as a High-Impact Practice
2. Living-Learning Communities and Residential Curriculum
3. Experiences and Outcomes with Digital Badging and Using ePortfolios